

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for selectively retrieving and displaying supplemental content related to a television program being displayed by an interactive television system, the method comprising:
  - 5 receiving a user command to find supplemental content;
  - obtaining contextual information pertaining to the television program being displayed;
  - sending an information request to a content source, the information request comprising the contextual information; and
  - 10 in response to the content source identifying supplemental content related to the television program being displayed based upon the contextual information, retrieving the supplemental content from the content source for display by the interactive television system.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the user command is received in response to a user activating a specifically-designated button on a remote control device for the interactive television system.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information comprises an indication of the television program being displayed.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein obtaining comprises:
  - 20 reading the indication of the television program from vertical blanking interval (VBI) data associated with the television program.
5. The method of claim 3, wherein obtaining comprises:

reading the indication of the television program from electronic programming guide (EPG) data associated with the television program.

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6. The method of claim 3, further comprising:  
searching the content source for supplemental content related to the indication of the television program.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information comprises a time index.

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8. The method of claim 7, wherein the time index indicates a time at which the user command is received.

9. The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
searching the content source for supplemental content related to a particular time segment of the television program based upon the time index.

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10. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information comprises at least one keyword obtained from closed-captioning text associated with the television program.

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11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:  
searching the content source for supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising:  
in response to supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword not being found at the content source:

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searching a global information network for supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword; and retrieving the supplemental content from the global information network for display by the interactive television system.

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The method of claim 1, further comprising:

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in response to supplemental content related to the television program not being found at the content source:

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searching a global information network for supplemental content related to the television program based on the contextual information; and retrieving the supplemental content from the global information network for display by the interactive television system.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the information request

comprises an identifier of the interactive television system.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the identifier comprises a

media access control (MAC) address.

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16. The method of claim 14, wherein the identifier comprises an Internet protocol (IP) address.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein retrieving comprises:

sending the identified supplemental content from the content source to an interactive television system associated with the identifier.

65 18. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information  
comprises an indication of a channel being displayed, the method further  
comprising:

using the indication the channel to identify a content source to receive the information request.

70 19. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

displaying the supplemental content simultaneously with the television program.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:  
reducing the size of the displayed television program relative to the  
size of the displayed supplemental content.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein retrieving comprises:

receiving a list of supplemental content items from the content source in response to a search by the content source;

receiving a user selection of a supplemental content item from the list;

sending the user selection to the content source; and

retrieving from the content source the selected supplemental content item for display by the interactive television system.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the list comprises at least  
85 one link to an item of supplemental content stored at the content source.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the at least one link comprises a uniform resource locator (URL).

24. The method of claim 20, further comprising:  
filtering the list of items of supplemental content results based on a  
90 set of user preferences.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the information request  
comprises the set of user preferences.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user  
preference indicates a type of supplemental content to exclude.

95 27. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user  
preference indicates a type of supplemental content preferred by the user.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user  
preference indicates a source of supplemental content preferred by the user.

29. The method of claim 24, wherein at least one user  
100 preference is stored in response to historical analysis of user selections from  
prior lists of items of supplemental content.

30. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
receiving a list of supplemental content items from the content  
source in response to a search of a global information network;  
105 receiving a user selection of a supplemental content item from the  
list; and  
retrieving from the global information network the selected  
supplemental content item for display by the interactive television system.

31. A system for selectively retrieving and displaying supplemental content related to a television program being displayed by an interactive television system, the system comprising:

110 a remote control device for the interactive television system, the remote control device comprising a specifically-designated button for requesting supplemental content related to the television program; and

115 a set top box for the interactive television system, the set top box being configured to obtain contextual information pertaining to the television program being displayed, send an information request comprising the contextual information to a content source, and retrieve supplemental content from the content source for display by the interactive television system in response to the 120 content source identifying supplemental content related to the television program based upon the contextual information.

125 32. The system of claim 31, further comprising:

a display device for displaying the supplemental content retrieved from the content source.

130 33. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information comprises an indication of the television program being displayed.

135 34. The system of claim 33, wherein the set top box is further configured to read the indication of the television program from vertical blanking interval (VBI) data associated with the television program.

130        35. The system of claim 33, wherein the set top box is further  
configured to read the indication of the television program from electronic  
programming guide (EPG) data associated with the television program.

135        36. The system of claim 33, further comprising:  
a search engine configured to search the content source for  
supplemental content related to the indication of the television program.

37. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information  
comprises a time index.

38. The system of claim 37, wherein the time index indicates a  
time at which the user command is received.

140        39. The system of claim 37, further comprising:  
a search engine configured to search the content source for  
supplemental content related to a particular time segment of the television  
program based upon the time index.

145        40. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information  
comprises at least one keyword obtained from closed-captioning text associated  
with the television program.

41. The system of claim 40, further comprising:  
a search engine configured to search the content source for  
supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword.

150        42        The system of claim 41, further comprising:

a search engine configured, in response to supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword not being found at the content source, to search a global information network for supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword;

155                   wherein the set top box is further configured to retrieve the supplemental content from the global information network for display by the interactive television system.

43.   The system of claim 31, further comprising:

                  a search engine configured, in response to supplemental content related to the television program not being found at the content source, to search a global information network for supplemental content related to the television program based on the contextual information; and

                  wherein the set top box is further configured to retrieve the supplemental content from the global information network for display by the interactive television system.

44.   The system of claim 31, wherein the information request comprises an identifier of the interactive television system.

45.   The system of claim 44, wherein the identifier comprises a media access control (MAC) address.

170                   46.   The system of claim 44, wherein the identifier comprises an Internet protocol (IP) address.

47. The system of claim 44, wherein the content source is configured to send the identified supplemental content to an interactive television system associated with the identifier.

175 48. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information comprises an indication of a channel being displayed, and wherein the set top box is further configured to use the indication the channel to identify a content source to receive the information request.

180 49. The system of claim 31, wherein set top box is configured to simultaneously display the supplemental content with the television program.

50. The system of claim 49, wherein the set top box is further configured to reduce the size of the displayed television program relative to the size of the displayed supplemental content.

185 51. The system of claim 31, wherein the set top box is further configured to receive a list of supplemental content items from the content source in response to a search by the content source, receive a user selection of a supplemental content item from the list, send the user selection to the content source, and retrieve from the content source the selected supplemental content item for display by the interactive television system.

190 52. The system of claim 51, wherein the list comprises at least one link to an item of supplemental content stored at the content source.

53. The system of claim 52, wherein the at least one link comprises a uniform resource locator (URL).

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54. The system of claim 50, further comprising:  
195 a filtering component configured to filter the list of items of supplemental content results based on a set of user preferences.

55. The system of claim 54, wherein the information request comprises the set of user preferences.

56. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference 200 indicates a type of supplemental content to exclude.

57. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference indicates a type of supplemental content preferred by the user.

58. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference indicates a source of supplemental content preferred by the user.

205 59. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference is stored in response to historical analysis of user selections from prior lists of items of supplemental content.

60. The system of claim 31, wherein the set top box is further configured to receive a list of supplemental content items from the content source 210 in response to a search of a global information network, receive a user selection of a supplemental content item from the list, and retrieve from the global information network the selected supplemental content item for display by the interactive television system.